Orbi Satellite

Orbi RBS20 Satellite Review: Is It Worth the Upgrade?

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In the ever-evolving world of home networking, having strong and consistent WiFi coverage is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. If you're a user of the Netgear Orbi ecosystem or considering joining it, the Orbi RBS20 satellite might have caught your attention. Marketed as a reliable companion to the Orbi router systems, the RBS20 promises to enhance coverage and improve network performance. But is it truly worth the upgrade? In this review, we dive into the key features, performance, pros, and cons of the **Orbi RBS20 satellite** to help you decide.

What is the Orbi RBS20 Satellite?

The Orbi RBS20 is a satellite unit designed to expand the coverage of your existing Orbi WiFi system. It's compatible with various Orbi routers such as the RBR20, RBR40, and RBR50. By adding this satellite to your Orbi mesh network, you can eliminate WiFi dead zones in your home and enjoy seamless connectivity from room to room.

Key Specifications

- **Wireless Standards:** 802.11ac (WiFi 5)
- **Bands:** Tri-band (2.4GHz + 5GHz + dedicated 5GHz backhaul)
- **Coverage Area:** Up to 2,000 sq. ft.
- **Max Speed:** Up to 400Mbps on 2.4GHz and 866Mbps on 5GHz
- **Ports:** 2 Ethernet LAN ports
- **Compatibility:** Works with Orbi routers RBR20, RBR40, RBR50

Setup and Installation

One of the biggest strengths of the Orbi ecosystem, including the RBS20, is its user-friendly setup. To add the RBS20 to your existing Orbi network:

1. Plug the satellite into a power outlet.
2. Wait for the LED light to turn solid white.
3. Use the Orbi app or log in to the orbilogin.com web interface.
4. Navigate to Add Satellite and follow the prompts.
5. Once synced, the satellite LED should turn blue, indicating a successful connection.

The entire process typically takes under 10 minutes and requires no technical expertise.

Performance

The performance of the Orbi RBS20 is impressive for a mid-tier satellite. Thanks to its tri-band configuration, it uses a dedicated backhaul channel to communicate with the router, which reduces congestion and maximizes speed for connected devices.

In real-world tests, the RBS20 performs exceptionally well in medium to large homes. Users report minimal drop-offs in speed even at the edge of the satellite's coverage range. It handles streaming, gaming, and video conferencing without noticeable lag or buffering.

Design and Build Quality

The RBS20 shares the signature white tower-like design of other Orbi units. It's sleek, modern, and blends well with most home decors. The device is compact enough to fit on a shelf or desk without drawing much attention. Its dual Ethernet ports allow wired connections for smart TVs, game consoles, or desktop computers, which is a bonus for households with multiple wired devices.

Compatibility and Integration

The Orbi RBS20 integrates seamlessly with existing Orbi routers, particularly the RBR20 and RBR40. While it can also work with the higher-end RBR50, it may slightly bottleneck the overall system due to speed limitations of the RBS20 compared to the RBR50.

One important note: the RBS20 is not backward compatible with older Netgear routers that are not part of the Orbi ecosystem. If you're not using an Orbi router, you won't be able to use the RBS20.

Pros

- **Easy Setup:** Minimal configuration required with the Orbi app or web portal.
- **Seamless Roaming:** Devices automatically switch to the best signal source.
- **Improved Coverage:** Eliminates WiFi dead zones effectively.
- **Tri-Band Connectivity:** Dedicated backhaul maintains consistent speeds.
- **Dual Ethernet Ports:** Great for connecting wired devices.

Cons

- **Not WiFi 6 Compatible:** Sticks with WiFi 5, which may limit future-proofing.
- **No Standalone Use:** Only works with compatible Orbi routers.
- **Speed Limitation:** May not fully complement high-speed Orbi routers like RBR50.

Is It Worth the Upgrade?

If you already own an Orbi system and are looking to improve your home network coverage without breaking the bank, the RBS20 is a solid upgrade. It offers good performance, reliable connection, and ease of use. However, if you are starting fresh and future-proofing is a priority, you might consider newer models with WiFi 6 capabilities.

The RBS20 is especially worthwhile for:

- Homes with multiple floors
- Users experiencing weak signal in specific rooms
- Families with moderate to high internet usage

Conclusion

The Netgear Orbi RBS20 is a well-rounded satellite unit for users within the Orbi ecosystem. It fills in coverage gaps effectively and offers features that support a reliable and smooth internet experience. While it may lack the latest WiFi 6 tech, its strong performance and user-friendly interface make it a worthwhile addition to your home network.

So, is the Orbi RBS20 worth the upgrade? If you're already invested in the Orbi ecosystem and need more coverage, the answer is a resounding yes.